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It is only in order of his later time that I would put Mr. Cawein first among those Mid-Western poets, of whom he is the youngest. Poetry in the Middle West has had its development in which it was eclipsed by the splendor, transitory if not vain, of the California school. But it is deeply rooted in the life of the region, and is as true to its origins as any faithful portraiture of the Mid-Western landscape could be; you could not mistake the source of the poem or the picture. In a certain tenderness of light and coloring, the poems would recall the mellowed masterpieces of the older literatures rather than those of the New England school, where conscience dwells almost rebukingly with beauty. Perhaps if I name Mr. Cowein with Mr. James Whitcomb Riley, and with both those poets as true and fine, Mr. J. J. Piatt and Mrs. S. M. B. Piatt, I shall be making my meaning clearer. No doubt, there are others who will not at the moment name themselves to me, but keep themselves for the reader's less hurried recollection, and with whom he will like to group these. If the Middle West had produced no poets but these, she would have uttered herself in poetry in a voice not mistakable for any other. Each of them is an artist, and with their native quality in common, each has a peculiar charm. It is enough to say that Mr. Cawein's poetry has a beauty which is enchantingly its own, and with a family favor recognizable in the work of the others, is otherwise akin to that only as it is akin to what is beautiful in all poetry.

W. D. HOWELLS.

RENE BAZIN'S NEW NOVEL.*

“‘Ah! there you are, father! I am not late?’

“‘Prompt as a soldier, my friend, like myself: I have only just come.’

“General Philippe de Meximieu was standing on a convex, pebbled strip between green slopes, awaiting the arrival of Michel. . . . He allowed his son to approach without making a movement towards him: he was preoccupied; his back was turned to his château, and he was looking fixedly, with an air of distrust and surprise, towards the Southwest, into the arch formed by the leafless oaks over the forest road.

“‘Did you hear that?’ he demanded.

“‘What?’

“‘What they are singing. Listen, they are coming this way.’

“The force of the wind and the accidents of the ground had prevented Michel from hearing before. In the woods to the left, powerful, ardent, musical voices were singing the ‘*Internationale*.’* Most of the words

* “*Le Blé Qui Lève*.” By René Bazin. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

were drowned in the depths of the wooded solitudes; a few, however, came with perfect distinctness to the ears of the two men. . . .

"'Scoundrels!' said the General. 'Is it possible to sing such horrors?'

"'They are drunk.'

"'That is one vice the more.'

"'Drunk with the hatred which has been poured out to them in overflowing measure. But how many there were who saw only the label of the beverage! And that was beautiful!'

"'You think so? The murder of officers?'

"'No, fraternity.'

"'Listen!'

"The wood-cutters approached. The wind bore their cries on its cold wings. At times, these cries seemed to be hymns, of which they had the amplitude and the prolonged resonances in the forest. Besides, the approaching night rendered the air attentive. All at once, to the left, a group of men appeared in a narrow path almost perpendicular to that in which M. de Meximieu and his son were standing. They were marching in disorder, and one of them flourished a bugle before him. . . . When they reached the crossroads and perceived the two bourgeois motionless at the entrance to the Fonteneilles road, they hesitated. The song was arrested on the parted lips of the young men in the van. But Ravoux, President of the Union of the Wood-cutters of Fonteneilles, took up the couplet with a voice metallic and knotty as a hickory bough.

"His companions imitated him. A flame of joy illumined their eyes, the malicious joy of vexing and berating the adversary with impunity. Still most of them lifted their hats as they passed, and Ravoux was of the number. . . . They disappeared in the direction of the village.

"Another band larger than the first appeared.

"'They come from my woods,' said M. de Meximieu, 'and they insult him who gives them bread! Do you know these fellows?'

"The heads emerged from the shadow one by one.

"'All,' Michel replied.

"The men advanced, singing or mute, lifting their hats or remaining covered.

"Michel named them as they went by: Lampoignant, Trépard, Dix-neuf, Bélisaire, Paradis, Supiat, Gilbert Cloquet,—Cloquet saluted with averted head—Fontroubade, Méchin, Padovan, Durgé, Gaudlion, etc. . . .

"A young voice launched anew one of the vindictive couplets of the vindictive chanson. Through the immense, deceitful peace of the forest the words coursed and issued forth to proclaim afar that the worst passions of politics had invaded the rural regions."

This fragment from the opening chapter of René Bazin's new novel, "*Le Blé Qui Lève*," strikes the key-note of the volume and prefigures adequately its trend. The father, General Philippe de Meximieu, owner of the Château of Fonteneilles, is an absentee

* A sort of twentieth-century "Carmagnole"; the rallying song of the contemporary European revolutionists.

landlord for whom his inherited lands are nothing more than a source of revenue. The son, Michel, who administers the estate, loves every inch of its ground, and takes a keen interest in the welfare of the humble laborers who earn their daily bread upon it. Furthermore, Michel is a sort of Christian Socialist. He has a lofty idea of the social rôle of the landed proprietor, and yearns to bridge the constantly widening chasm between the rural laborers and their employers by instilling into both a higher and a Christian conception of life. But he knows that he is suffering from an incurable disease which condemns him to an early death, and he despairs of being able to make any material contribution himself to this transformation. Among Michel's day laborers, however, one Gilbert Cloquet,—he who in the defiant march of the wood-cutters through the forest saluted with averted gaze,—appreciates his motives, although he disapproves his methods, which he does not comprehend; and this one is destined, without suspecting it, to succeed him as a propagandist of the application of the teachings of the Gospel to the strained rural conditions.

Cloquet is a leading member of the Wood-cutters' Union of Fonteneilles, in the mission of which he believes with all the intensity of a strong nature. Michel is not opposed to the Union, but he desires to see it imbued with his own noble aspirations—Christianized, in a word. In the course of a conversation with Cloquet in the wood, he explains his attitude:

"It is the fashion to flatter the laborer and abuse the noble. The truth is, Cloquet, that we have both sadly deteriorated. We are suffering from the same malady; indolence and pride. All the hatreds come from that. . . . What makes me angry, what gives me pain, and what causes me to pity you is the impossible ideal of injustice that is held up to you, an ideal so ignoble and petty that not one of the sturdy wood-cutters of the France of yore would have deigned to listen to it. Your wings have been clipped by your chiefs, as if you were barnyard fowls. Appetites have been given the place due to justice, hatred the place due to love. But listen! All this can be changed. If the Union shall one day be baptized, if there shall be a benediction of the mounting sea, that day, Gilbert, living or dead I shall be with you, I shall applaud, I shall believe in a better, that is to say, a more noble, land, in a new chivalry, in a return of the saints among a blessed people. As true as the sun is shining, it is for that I am hoping."

By virtue of what ordeal Gilbert Cloquet, wood-cutter, came in time to adopt the belief and attitude of Michel de Meximieu,

noble, it would take too long to recount here. Suffice it to say that, after a succession of novel trials and tests (which take him far afield and which terminate in a Belgian monastery), he returns to Fonteneilles, forms an alliance with the village priest and (at risk of expulsion from his Union and even of bodily violence) announces to his free-thinking, priest-baiting fellow unionists that he has seen a new light and that he proposes to follow it. His exposition of the new order of things is brief but unequivocal:

"I have no ill to say of any one. My heart has not changed for the worse. Quite the reverse. But I have learned that we did not have life, and I have come back to tell you where it is to be found. I shall tell it to you once, twice, a dozen times, as long as I shall be in the world. No one shall prevent me. I mean to stay with you in the Union. The justice I have always desired I still desire, but now I know that it is more beautiful than I dreamed, and I am going to it."

"*Le Blé Qui Lève*" contains picturesque and dramatic portrayals of tumultuous labor-meetings in the woods and the village cabarets; sermons (less terse than Gilbert's) which might well be spared; and a touching love episode. It also contains descriptions of rural scenery and delineations of rural character which no other living French novelist could match.

Some years before René Bazin had given the full measure of his literary power in that magnificent prose-poem of the Vendée "*La Terre Qui Meurt*" (1899), which won him a seat in the French Academy, the critic, René Doumic, said of him: "We like him for the delicacy of soul and elevation of feeling shown in his books, and for his courage in remaining a pure and decent writer, while he is, at the same time, a truthful and clear-sighted one. . . . He inclines toward realism whose tone, at once frank and true, is a new note in our literature."

Granted that if all French novelists had been of the exceedingly scrupulous type of René Bazin, we should have missed some of the choicest passages in French letters; nevertheless, it would be a great pity if there should be an utter dearth of French novelists capable of depicting in all its marvellous strength and charm the almost patriarchal family life of the provinces of France. Because M. Bazin does this easily, spontaneously, inevitably even, as a provincial who loves the provinces and has always remained faithful to them, his writings deserve to be better known than they are in America.

ALVAN F. SANBORN.